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23 December 1998
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ORIGINAL: ARABIC

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-third session
Agenda item 40
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 23 December 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, and further to our frequent earlier letters concerning Israel's attacks on Lebanon, I have the honour to inform you of the incidence of another bloody attack committed by Israel against Lebanese civilians in a region which is at a distance of scores of kilometres from its borders and the regions it occupies.

At 1440 hours on 22 December 1998 Israeli military aircraft fired missiles on the area around the village of Janta, to the east of Baalbek, targeting the house of Lebanese national Muhammad Uthman. The house was destroyed and his wife and six of his children were killed and burnt beyond recognition.

This fresh carnage is yet another in the series of massacres perpetrated by Israel, which include those committed at Qana (18 April 1996), Nabatiyah (18 April 1996), Mansuri (14 April 1996) and Suhmur (12 April 1996), all of which created a furore in the media at the time. On this occasion, Israeli officials have yet again announced that the crime was committed unintentionally. However, it is in fact the tragic outcome of the policy of aggression and terrorism that Israel has pursued against Lebanon and its citizens for many years.

The apology offered by Israel on this occasion, like those which preceded it on other occasions, is rejected. It will not bring the dead back to life or restore to their loved ones those who were murdered. We present these tragic facts to the international community, as represented by the Security Council, in the enduring hope that it will take measures to repel the aggressor and halt the ongoing Israeli attacks that pose a threat to peace and security in the region and in the world.

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I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council and of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Samir MOUBARAK
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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General Assembly
Security Council

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S/1998/1216
24 December 1998
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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-third session
Agenda items 39, 40, 64, 71, 74, 91, 93, 149 and 155
QUESTION OF PALESTINE
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY - PREVENTION OF THE VIOLENT DISINTEGRATION OF STATES
GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT
THE RISK OF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
MACROECONOMIC POLICY QUESTIONS
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION
UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF INTERNATIONAL LAW
MEASURES TO ELIMINATE INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 22 December 1998 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith subparagraph (a) of the paragraph concerning the issue of the Iranian occupation of the three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates contained in the final communiqué of the nineteenth session of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council, held in Abu Dhabi from 7 to 9 December 1998.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under items 39, 40, 64, 71, 74, 91, 93, 149 and 155, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mohammad J. SAMHAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Excerpt from the final communiqué of the nineteenth session of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council, held in Abu Dhabi from 7 to 9 December 1998

(a) The issue of the occupation of the three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates:

The Supreme Council reviewed developments in the matter of the Iranian occupation of the three islands of the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa belonging to the United Arab Emirates. It noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran was persisting in making unacceptable claims with regard to the three islands and continuing to take measures designed to consolidate its occupation. The Supreme Council once again reaffirmed the need for the Iranian Government to respond to the repeated earnest and sincere invitations from the United Arab Emirates, the Gulf Cooperation Council States, the Damascus Declaration States, the League of Arab States and other regional and international organizations, institutions and groupings, to arrive at a peaceful solution of this conflict, thereby allowing the positive policies of the Government of President Mohammad Khatami to gain the credibility necessary for the establishment of mutual confidence, the development of cooperation and the upholding of security and stability in the region.

The Supreme Council reiterated its affirmation that the United Arab Emirates holds sovereignty over the three islands of the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa and its absolute support for all peaceful measures and means that country might adopt in order to restore its sovereignty over those islands. It also reiterated its request to the Iranian Government to terminate its occupation of the three islands, desist from its policy of imposing the status quo by force, refrain from placing Iranian installations on the islands with a view to altering their demographic composition, annul all measures, remove all installations already unilaterally put in place on the islands and use peaceful means, including referral of the issue to the International Court of Justice, in order to resolve the dispute, in accordance with the principles and precepts of international law.

UNITED NATIONS **S**

Security Council

Distr.
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24 December 1998
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LETTER DATED 23 DECEMBER 1998 FROM THE CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF BURKINA FASO TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the communiqué issued following the fourth ordinary session of the Central Organ of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, at the level of Heads of State and Government, held in Ouagadougou on 17 December 1998.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Paul Robert TIENDRÉBÉOGO
Second Counsellor
Chargé d'affaires, a.i.

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Annex

Communiqué of 17 December 1998 issued following the fourth ordinary session of the Central Organ of the Organization of African Unity Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, at the level of Heads of State and Government

The Central Organ of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution held its fourth ordinary session at the level of Heads of State and Government in Ouagadougou on 17 December 1998. The session was chaired by H.E. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso and current Chairman of OAU. At the end of its deliberations, the Central Organ decided as follows:

I. On the Dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea

The Central Organ considered the report of the OAU High-level Delegation on the dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea. It congratulated the Delegation on the commendable efforts it had made in order to promote a peaceful and comprehensive solution to the dispute.

The Central Organ took note of the respective positions of the two Parties on the proposals of the High-level Delegation.

The Central Organ endorsed the proposals for a Framework Agreement submitted by the OAU High-level Delegation to the two Parties which constituted an appropriate framework for the resolution of the dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The Central Organ commended the two Parties for the confidence they continue to repose in the OAU and for the cooperation they extended to the OAU High-level Delegation in the execution of its mandate, as well as the restraint that they had shown.

The Central Organ requested the OAU High-level Delegation to remain seized with the dispute and called on the two Parties to continue to cooperate with the Delegation with a view to creating the necessary conditions for a speedy implementation of the Framework Agreement. The Central Organ further urged both Parties to continue to exercise restraint.

II. On the Situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Central Organ expressed its grave concern over the unfolding situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its consequences for the peace, security and stability of the region. It reaffirmed its support for the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the importance the OAU attached to the need to respect the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of that country, in accordance with the provisions of the OAU Charter, particularly, Resolution AHG/Res.16 (I), adopted in Cairo in 1964.

The Central Organ fully endorsed the efforts exerted by President Frederick Chiluba of Zambia and other leaders in the region, aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the crisis and securing a Ceasefire Agreement between the concerned parties. In this connection, it welcomed the proposal to convene a Regional Summit in Lusaka on 27 and 28 December 1998.

The Central Organ called on all the concerned parties to cooperate fully with the leaders of the region in their efforts.

The Central Organ expressed satisfaction at the support the United Nations had lent to the regional efforts and the cooperation existing between the OAU and the United Nations.

III. On the Situation in Burundi

The Central Organ examined the situation in Burundi and expressed satisfaction at the progress made in the peace process in the country and within the framework of the Arusha talks held under the auspices of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere.

The Central Organ urged all the Burundian parties to pursue their efforts with a view to achieving a lasting solution to the conflict in Burundi.

The Central Organ commended the Facilitator and the countries of the Region for their relentless efforts to promote a peaceful solution to the conflict in Burundi and appealed to them to lift the sanctions imposed on Burundi.

In this connection, the Central Organ adopted a special Resolution on the question of sanctions.

IV. On Angola

The Central Organ reiterated that the primary cause of the crisis in Angola and of the current impasse in the peace process, was the failure by Mr. Jonas Savimbi and his military wing to comply with their obligations under the Lusaka Protocol and the relevant Security Council and OAU resolutions.

The Central Organ observed that the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA), led by Mr. Jonas Savimbi, was carrying out military actions against defenceless civilians and continued to lay landmines in areas where they had already been cleared. Additionally, UNITA continued to intensify its military build-up over the past few months in preparation for a full scale war against the people and government of the Republic of Angola.

The Central Organ endorsed the Southern African Development Community (SADC) decision taken in Mauritius in September 1998 which, inter alia, declared Mr. Savimbi as a war criminal and called for his isolation.

The Central Organ called upon all OAU Member States to strictly impose travel restrictions against Mr. Savimbi and other UNITA officials as demanded by the relevant Security Council resolutions.

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The Central Organ stressed the urgent need for peace, unity and national reconciliation in Angola.

The Central Organ appealed to the international community to render the necessary humanitarian and economic assistance for the reconstruction of Angola, especially, for the demining programme, the rehabilitation of key infrastructure destroyed by the war.

The Central Organ requested the countries of the Region in close cooperation with the Secretary-General of the OAU, to actively monitor developments in Angola and to act appropriately.

V. On Guinea-Bissau

The Central Organ expressed satisfaction at the positive developments that had taken place in the evolution of a conflict in Guinea-Bissau, particularly, the signing on 26 August 1998, in Prala, of a Ceasefire Agreement, the Abuja Agreement of 1 November 1998 and the appointment of a Prime Minister as well as proposals to form a Government of national unity, the structure and composition of which were defined at the Lomé meeting held on 15 December 1998.

The Central Organ commended Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Member States for the significant contribution made towards the gradual return of peace in Guinea-Bissau.

The Central Organ appealed to ECOWAS Member States that had pledged to provide troops for deployment in Guinea-Bissau, to honour their commitment as quickly as possible.

The Central Organ appealed to Member States of OAU and the United Nations to provide the necessary logistical support for the rapid deployment of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Guinea-Bissau.

VI. On the Situation in the Comoros

The Central Organ examined the situation in the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros in the light of the briefing made by H.E. Tadjidine Ben Saïd Massounde, the Acting President of the Comoros. It expressed its grave concern over the situation of anarchy prevailing in the Comorian Island of Anjouan and the humanitarian problems caused by the fighting which broke out between opposing factions within the separatist movement.

The Central Organ firmly supported the efforts made by the countries of the Region to deal with the situation prevailing in Anjouan. In that connection, it expressed satisfaction over the dispatch of a military assessment mission to the Comoros by the countries of the Region from 9 to 11 December 1998.

The Central Organ requested the countries of the Region to urgently take necessary measures to put an end to the situation prevailing in Anjouan. To that end, the Central Organ requested South Africa, in its capacity as the Coordinator of the regional efforts on the Comoros, to undertake consultations

with the other countries of the Region in order to take appropriate measures to deal with the situation.

The Central Organ appealed to Member States and the rest of the international community to provide humanitarian assistance to the people affected by the fighting in Anjouan.

UNITED
NATIONS

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REPORT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL CONCERNING THE CREDENTIALS OF THE ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIVE OF BRAZIL ON THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Pursuant to rule 15 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the Secretary-General wishes to report that he has received a letter dated 18 December 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations stating that Mrs. Celina Maria Assumpção do Valle Pereira has been appointed alternate representative of Brazil on the Security Council for the month of January 1999.

In the opinion of the Secretary-General, that communication constitutes adequate provisional credentials.

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UNITED
NATIONS

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S/1998/1219
24 December 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 23 DECEMBER 1998 FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED PURSUANT TO RESOLUTION 918 (1994) CONCERNING RWANDA ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 918 (1994) of 17 May 1994 concerning Rwanda, which was adopted by the Committee under the no-objection procedure on 23 December 1998, and is being submitted in accordance with the note by the President of the Security Council of 29 March 1995 (S/1995/234).

(Signed) Yukio SATOH
Chairman
Security Council Committee established
pursuant to resolution 918 (1994)
concerning Rwanda

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Annex

Report of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 918 (1994) concerning Rwanda

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 918 (1994) of 17 May 1994 concerning Rwanda covers the period from January to December 1998.

2. A report of the Committee covering its activities from 1 January to 31 December 1997 was submitted to the Security Council on 31 December 1997 (S/1997/1028).

II. SUMMARY OF THE COMMITTEE'S ACTIVITIES DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

3. At its 7th meeting, on 6 January 1998, the Committee elected its bureau for 1998, which consisted of Ambassador Hisashi Owada (Japan) as Chairman, who following his departure was succeeded by H.E. Mr. Yukio Satoh (Japan), with the delegations of Bahrain and Sweden providing the two Vice-Chairmen.

4. Although the restrictions imposed by paragraph 13 of resolution 918 (1994) on the sale or supply of arms and related matériel to the Government of Rwanda were terminated on 1 September 1996 in accordance with paragraph 8 of resolution 1011 (1995) of 16 August 1995, all States are required to continue to implement the foregoing restrictions with a view to preventing the sale and supply of arms and related matériel to non-governmental forces for use in Rwanda.

III. OBSERVATIONS

5. The Committee does not have any specific monitoring mechanism to ensure the effective implementation of the arms embargo, and would like to recall its previous observations that it relies solely on the cooperation of States and organizations in a position to provide pertinent information. During the reporting period, no violations of the arms embargo were brought to the attention of the Committee. In this regard, the Committee took note of Security Council resolution 1196 (1998) of 16 September 1998, in which, inter alia, the Council reiterates the obligation of all States to carry out the decisions of the Council on arms embargoes and also reiterates its request that all States report information on possible violations of arms embargoes established by the Council to the relevant Security Council Committees. The Committee also strongly endorses paragraph 2 of that resolution, in which the Council encourages each Member State, as appropriate, to consider as a means of implementing these obligations the adoption of legislation or other legal measures making the violation of arms embargoes established by the Council a criminal offence.

6. In accordance with paragraph 4 of resolution 1196 (1998), the Committee intends to consider appropriate steps with a view to improving the monitoring of the arms embargo imposed against Rwanda, and to that end will establish channels of communication with relevant regional and subregional organizations and bodies.

UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

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24 December 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 24 DECEMBER 1998 FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED PURSUANT TO RESOLUTION 985 (1995) CONCERNING LIBERIA ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 985 (1995) of 13 April 1995 concerning Liberia, which was adopted by the Committee under the no-objection procedure on 24 December 1998 and is being submitted in accordance with the note by the President of the Security Council of 29 March 1995 (S/1995/234).

(Signed) Bernd Niehaus QUESADA
Chairman
Security Council Committee established
pursuant to resolution 985 (1995)
concerning Liberia

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Annex

Report of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 985 (1995) concerning Liberia

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 985 (1995) of 13 April 1995 concerning Liberia covers the period from January to December 1998. The Committee held two meetings in 1998.

2. A report of the Committee covering its activities from 1 January to 31 December 1997 was submitted to the Security Council on 31 December 1997 (S/1997/1026).

II. SUMMARY OF THE COMMITTEE'S ACTIVITIES DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

3. At its 5th meeting, on 6 January 1998, the Committee elected its bureau for 1998, which consisted of Ambassador Fernando Berrocal Soto (Costa Rica) as Chairman, who following his departure was succeeded by Ambassador Bernd Niehaus Quesada (Costa Rica), with the delegations of Japan and Sweden providing the two Vice-Chairmen.

III. OBSERVATIONS

4. The Committee does not have any specific monitoring mechanism to ensure the effective implementation of the arms embargo, and would like to recall its past observations that it relies solely on the cooperation of States and organizations in a position to provide pertinent information. During the reporting period, no violations of the arms embargo were brought to the attention of the Committee. In this regard, the Committee took note of Security Council resolution 1196 (1998) of 16 September 1998, in which, inter alia, the Council reiterates the obligation of all States to carry out the decisions of the Council on arms embargoes and also reiterates it request that all States report information on possible violations of arms embargoes established by the Council to the relevant Security Council Committees. The Committee also strongly endorses paragraph 2 of that resolution, in which the Council encourages each Member State, as appropriate, to consider as a means of implementing these obligations the adoption of legislation or other legal measures making the violation of arms embargoes established by the Council a criminal offence.

5. In accordance with paragraph 4 of resolution 1196 (1998), the Committee intends to consider appropriate steps with a view to improving the monitoring of the arms embargo imposed against Liberia, and to that end will establish channels of communication with relevant regional and subregional organizations and bodies.

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Security Council

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL PREPARED PURSUANT TO RESOLUTIONS 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998) AND 1203 (1998) OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998) of 31 March 1998, 1199 (1998) of 23 September 1998 and 1203 (1998) of 24 October 1998. It covers the period since my most recent report of 4 December 1998 (S/1998/1147).

II. COMPREHENSIVE REGIME TO MONITOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROHIBITIONS IMPOSED BY THE SECURITY COUNCIL IN RESOLUTION 1160 (1998)

2. The second consultative meeting of organizations participating in the comprehensive monitoring regime was held on 14 December 1998 in Vienna. Representatives of the Danube Commission, the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Western European Union and the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) Force Commander exchanged information on the monitoring of the prohibitions established by the Council in resolutions 1160 (1998) and 1199 (1998) and addressed practical issues arising in that regard.

III. SITUATION IN KOSOVO

3. This section of the report is based on information provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission and individual Member States. The report also includes information submitted by the Chairman-in-Office of OSCE (see annex I).

4. Since my last report was issued, the situation in Kosovo has not significantly improved and there are alarming signs of potential deterioration. While various sources report that the ceasefire is still holding, there are indications of growing tensions on the ground. During the first half of

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December, violence reached its highest level since the 16 October Agreement; more than 50 persons have died in violent attacks.

5. Meanwhile, despite the efforts of Ambassador Christopher Hill of the United States of America and the European Union Envoy, Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria, to bring the parties concerned to the negotiation table, there has been no progress in the political dialogue in Kosovo. Recent statements by both sides regarding the draft agreement proposed by Ambassador Hill indicate that there is considerable distance between the positions of the parties and that they are far from engaging in meaningful negotiations.

6. Though no additional abduction cases have been reported since mid-November, the fate and whereabouts of abducted persons remain unknown and family members and others have begun to organize public protests and appeals to representatives of OSCE. These protests, which have also addressed arbitrary detentions, have failed to obtain satisfactory results or information. Reports continue to be received concerning arbitrary detention and systematic ill-treatment of persons in police detention and pre-trial detention.

Returns

7. Despite tensions, displaced persons continue to return to their homes. UNHCR estimates that some 100,000 people have now returned, while some 200,000 remained displaced within Kosovo. The estimated number of internally displaced persons has increased based on the evidence obtained from the first phase of the shelter survey, and on figures cited by the Yugoslav state media on 14 December.

8. As winter's cold weather has arrived, more people are seeking to return home, encouraged in part by the growing presence of humanitarian agencies and the Kosovo Verification Mission. Returns began even to such "sensitive" locations as Junik, near the Albanian border; the Djakovica area; and Lodja, a village near Pec. Potential returnees have made tentative visits even to the Malisevo area. According to UNHCR, some 1,300 of the 6,000 residents of Junik who had fled during the Government offensive in August have returned, although the army and police have maintained a heavy presence in the area as they consider it one of the key routes in trafficking of illegal weapons and personnel of Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units. On 11 December, UNHCR and the Observer Mission escorted the first group of 16 displaced persons back to Lodja. They had expressed a wish to rebuild their houses which had been severely damaged last August. The return was preceded by assurances from police officials in Pec that returnees would not be harmed. Since the area has been almost totally destroyed, the repair of the local school will take priority so that it can be used as a temporary shelter while returnees rebuild their homes.

9. These returns indicate the genuine desire of many displaced persons to return home. However, the process is impeded by the lack of housing and adequate security mechanisms to monitor returnees' reintegration into their respective communities. Other returns, however, have taken place in situations of continued tension and sporadic clashes and under far from ideal conditions, apparently as a result of desperation and the lack of other options. Difficulties in paying for accommodation in the places of refuge and the worsening winter weather prompted many of the displaced to opt for return.

10. Among those who have returned are some 10,000 who previously sought safety in Montenegro. The number of displaced in Montenegro is at present estimated at 27,000. Bosnia and Herzegovina now hosts an estimated 10,000 refugees from Kosovo, of whom 6,700 have registered with UNHCR. Some of them have already requested assistance to repatriate. According to the latest registration of refugees from Kosovo in Albania, there are some 24,000 persons there. In addition, it is estimated that there are still some 20,000 displaced persons from Kosovo in other areas of Serbia. The latter figure might be growing, as there are some indications of fear among the Serbian inhabitants of remote villages as Kosovo Albanians return.

Obstacles to returns/security

11. On 20 November, two policemen were killed and three injured in a suspected ambush by Kosovo Albanian paramilitaries in Prilep. On 3 December, 12 Albanians were killed in separate incidents, 8 by Yugoslav Army border guards in the area of the Gorozup watchtower, 1 by Kosovo Albanian paramilitaries along the Pristina-Pec road and 3 others on a main street in downtown Pristina under circumstances which are unclear.

12. Not only has the number of persons killed increased dramatically, but during the reporting period there were violent incidents in heavily populated urban centres. On 4 December, an armed confrontation between Serbian security personnel and Kosovo Albanian paramilitaries occurred in the hospital compound in Pec, resulting in the death of one of the Kosovo Albanians. On 11 December, three Kosovo Albanian men - a policeman, and two state company employees - were killed in Glogovac. On 14 December, 34 violent deaths occurred in two separate incidents. Thirty Albanians were killed and 12 wounded near the Gorozup and Liken border posts in fighting between Yugoslav border guards and a group of armed Albanians. That same day, two masked men entered and attacked patrons in a cafe in Pec, killing six Serbs. On 18 December, the Deputy Mayor of Kosovo Polje was kidnapped and murdered.

13. Following the 13 October accord between President Slobodan Milosevic and United States Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke, Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units have taken advantage of the lull in the fighting to re-establish their control over many villages in Kosovo, as well as over some areas near urban centres and highways. These actions by Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units have only served to provoke the Serbian authorities, leading to statements that if the Kosovo Verification Mission cannot control these units the Government would. The local authorities have indicated to UNHCR that they would not allow "terrorists to take over Kosovo". Government officials have warned that recent incidents, particularly attempts by the armed groups to cross into Kosovo from Albania and killings of civilians, would justify a renewal of operations against Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units.

14. In this regard, serious apprehension of a new cycle of major hostilities has been expressed by different sources. While Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units are taking an increasingly bold stance, the Serbian police force is responding by increasing patrols and the use of mobile checkpoints. Some reports suggest that the number of Yugoslav Army and Serbian special police units deployed in Kosovo may exceed agreed figures.

15. The persistent insecurity reinforces UNHCR's position of not promoting return from areas outside Kosovo. However, where individuals clearly express their wish to repatriate, UNHCR will facilitate their return, seeking clearance, ensuring that they possess the necessary documentation and providing transport assistance, if appropriate. UNHCR will monitor the security situation of returnees and of those who remain displaced within Kosovo and will assess their material needs.

Abductions

16. The lack of information about the fate of persons abducted by Kosovo Albanian paramilitaries has given rise to growing impatience among the families and their affected communities. According to information received from the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as of 7 December, 282 civilians and police have been abducted by Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units, 136 of whom are sill unaccounted for. On 9 December, the political spokesperson of the Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units, Adem Demaqi, noted publicly that he had made efforts to release abducted Serb civilians and that he expected "the Serbian side" to do the same. However, Mr. Demaqi admitted that he feared that many persons listed as missing had been killed in clashes between the police and Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units during the summer offensive. On 10 December, Kosovo Serbs from Orahovac organized a march to the Kosovo Albanian paramilitary-controlled area of Dragobilje, demanding information about the fate of the missing. The march proceeded without incident, owing mainly to the mediation of the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission, and concluded with a meeting between Serb and Kosovo Albanian representatives. On 11 December, Serb civilians from the Urosevac area held a group of five national and international humanitarian workers for approximately eight hours, demanding that they be exchanged for two Serbs abducted in July. The group was released through the intervention of the Observer Mission. On 14 December, relatives and supporters of abducted Serbs demonstrated outside the OSCE headquarters in Pristina; a letter was submitted to Ambassador Walker requesting OSCE to take concrete steps to resolve the issue.

Visit of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

17. The purpose of the visit of the High Commissioner for Refugees to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 20 to 22 December was to review the effectiveness of the United Nations humanitarian action in the new situation and to ensure that there was a solid foundation for close cooperation between the Kosovo Verification Mission and the humanitarian action led by UNHCR. In Kosovo she met senior government officials and Ambassador William Walker, the Head of the Verification Mission, with whom she visited returnees who in some cases were repairing their homes, and met Croatian refugees at a collection centre. In Belgrade, the High Commissioner met with President Milosevic and other senior officials.

18. In her meeting with the President at the end of her mission, the High Commissioner reviewed the assistance programme and discussed possible solutions for the problem of over 500,000 refugees from earlier conflicts in the region as well as the humanitarian situation in Kosovo. With regard to the latter issue,

the High Commissioner noted significant positive changes that had occurred since her last meeting with the President three months ago. The conflict which had caused large-scale displacement had effectively ceased in October and many persons had returned to their villages, if not to their homes. The humanitarian operation was now able to meet the challenge and an immediate humanitarian catastrophe had been averted.

19. The High Commissioner strongly condemned acts of violence and intimidation against all civilians. She noted that many Kosovo Albanians feared detention on suspicion of having been involved in the conflict and that this was adversely affecting the prospects for the return of those still displaced, as well as the sustainability of the returns that had occurred. A number of those she had met had asked her about an amnesty and she recalled earlier exchanges on the subject with President Milosevic and the authorities. The High Commissioner expressed her concern that the necessary safeguards on return would not be in place at the time they were most needed, and requested the President to adopt an amnesty law as soon as possible. Such an amnesty was a key component of confidence-building in any post-conflict return and would contribute to the declared aim of the authorities of finding a political solution without delay.

20. The High Commissioner also underlined the importance of the restoration of essential services, such as electricity, and the need to help health and education services recover from the effects of the conflict. President Milosevic said that the restoration of such services was a high priority, but adversely affected by acts of violence committed by "terrorists".

Aid/shelter programmes

21. UNHCR and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are conducting the second phase of the shelter survey, which will cover some 500 more villages in western and central Kosovo.

22. At the same time, UNHCR is providing assistance to those returnees undertaking major repairs of their houses. Some 450 houses in 31 villages are currently undergoing repairs using startup kits from UNHCR and other aid agencies, including heavy-duty tarpaulin and wooden beams and fillets, battens for window and door frames, boards, nails and tools. UNHCR has also distributed 4,500 shelter kits for minor repairs, which include plastic sheets, wood, nails and hammers, thus facilitating the preparation of at least one room in the house for the winter.

23. One of the most significant problems in Kosovo facing people affected by the fighting has been the lack of food. Wheat flour stored for the winter has often been either looted or burned. Thousands of livestock have been killed. Farmers missed the October planting season. Thus many displaced persons will depend on donated food supplies well into 1999.

24. In addition to the six-days-per-week deliveries of food and other humanitarian assistance coordinated by UNHCR from Pristina, aid distribution has begun in Pec. Convoys from Pec will deliver assistance to nearby villages and remote areas in Decane and Klina. Another distribution centre is scheduled to begin operations from Prizren and will distribute food supplies to 10

municipalities in southern Kosovo. These decentralized distribution centres will expand the capacity of UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations to deliver needed relief supplies to a larger group of people, targeting more areas.

Security of the humanitarian personnel

25. Humanitarian agencies in general have unhindered access to all areas of Kosovo. Although Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units have not directly posed a threat or any obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian aid, their practice of laying mines and engaging in sporadic clashes with the Serbian police clearly create a risk for humanitarian workers. No harassment of aid workers by the Government forces has been reported.

Coordination with the Kosovo Verification Mission

26. Although the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission has significantly increased in size and presence, the operational date and deployment of the Verification Mission remain delayed and expectations of large-scale presence of international verifiers on the ground have not been met. OHCHR field staff report that civilians in urban areas and villages are pointing increasingly to unfulfilled expectations and to even further delays in deployment likely to be caused by the traditional winter holidays. The combination of unfulfilled expectations of international confidence-building, dramatic incidents of urban-area violence and border clashes is exacerbating an already grave human rights situation.

27. UNHCR has systematically continued briefings for the incoming observers of the Verification Mission at their induction sessions. With four liaison officers now in place, UNHCR maintains daily contact between the Mission and the humanitarian agencies on staff security and humanitarian issues. The basis is being laid for a functional and effective working relationship, similar to the one developed with the Diplomatic Observer Mission. As with the Observer Mission, UNHCR, on behalf of all humanitarian agencies, is establishing a mechanism for exchange of information with the Verification Mission to promote conditions that would spur returns to those areas where return is feasible.

28. The Head of the Verification Mission assured the High Commissioner for Refugees during their meeting that the Mission would support the humanitarian action in every way possible consistent with its mandate and primary task. The High Commissioner assured him of close coordination on the part of UNHCR in order to make the best possible use of the potential of the Mission to contribute, with its rapidly expanding field presence, to creating conditions that allowed sustainable return and in helping identify humanitarian needs. They recognized that a good foundation for this cooperation had already been laid, including, for example, with information provided for the humanitarian actors by the Verification Mission Mine Action and Information Centre, with which UNHCR works very closely.

Trials and detainees

29. The trials reported upon at length in my previous report continue on a daily basis, according to a regular court schedule. Trials have now been

scheduled additionally in the court districts of Gnjilane and Prokuplje. Several proceedings were delayed or rescheduled for the period of the traditional December holidays, which are not observed as holidays in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights observes that the proceedings so rescheduled involve especially large groups of defendants or incidents and operations of an especially sensitive nature. The Office's complement of trial monitors will not decrease during the December holiday period and the Office continues to meet with court officials, prosecutors and defence attorneys, and to monitor proceedings.

30. The absence of an amnesty law continues to be a major hindrance to confidence among the population. While paragraph 10 of the Serbian Government's statement of 13 October on the accord between President Milosevic and United States Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke envisaged an amnesty, the present practice of the Serbian authorities contradicts it. UNHCR expressed its concern over this situation in a letter dated 9 December addressed to the Deputy Federal Prime Minister, highlighting the importance of an amnesty in the context of confidence-building and requesting an opportunity to discuss with the competent officials the specific provisions of such a law while it was still in draft form.

31. In view of regular reports of ill-treatment of detainees and of the continuing absence of an elaborated policy to implement paragraphs 10 and 11 of the 13 October accord, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights pursued its efforts to review implementation options. To that end, the Office met with representatives of the Kosovo Albanian political leadership and continues to correspond with the Serbian Ministry of Justice. On 18 November, the Ministry responded in writing to inquiries by the Office regarding the whereabouts and status of named detainees, largely humanitarian and medical workers and juveniles. On 27 November, the Office asked the ministry about 46 additional cases of reported human rights violations, largely of the elderly, young persons and invalids.

Forensic investigation

32. On 10 December, Serbian security forces refused to allow a team of Finnish forensic investigators, accompanied by the Ambassador of Finland to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to proceed without a police escort to the site of Gornje Obrinje. Serbian authorities pointed to a provision of the forensic investigators' terms of reference which permits Serbian Government presence during the investigations. The Finnish team noted, however, that the excessive police and military presence (two buses of security forces, two armed personnel carriers and six armoured vehicles) was likely to provoke action by Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units and would thus endanger the team. After a formal protest, the chief of the forensic team met with the Minister of Justice of Serbia. The Minister reportedly assured him that such an incident would not be repeated and proposed that only one investigative judge and two Serbian forensic experts accompany the team.

IV. OBSERVATIONS

33. It bears repeating that the problems in Kosovo can be resolved only by political means through negotiations between the parties directly concerned. I urge all parties concerned to engage without delay in such negotiations; the lack of agreement so far has a direct bearing on the current volatility. The tireless efforts of Ambassador Christopher Hill of the United States and of the European Union Envoy, Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch, aimed at finding a peaceful political settlement in Kosovo merit the support of all those wishing to set Kosovo on a positive course. Progress in this direction is all the more pressing in view of the increased levels of violence in Kosovo in December and its spread to urban areas, which earlier remained relatively untouched by the hostilities. These actions put at risk the entire peace process and could trigger a renewal of fighting in the coming months.

34. Should the worst happen, it would be very difficult for the humanitarian action to meet the resulting needs, still less encourage those affected to return and rebuild their homes and lives once more, which reinforces my conviction that those in a position to influence developments must spare no effort to find a negotiated settlement in early 1999, before it is too late.

35. I urge all the parties concerned to honour their obligations under the 16 October Agreement and to refrain from actions that could provoke resumed hostilities that would only lead to the further suffering of civilians. Continued instability in Kosovo impedes the return process and has the potential to jeopardize humanitarian efforts.

36. In this regard, the completion of the full deployment of the Kosovo Verification Mission should become a decisive factor for stability and confidence-building in Kosovo. The United Nations agencies that have a presence on the ground will continue developing their cooperation with the Verification Mission in order to coordinate efforts aimed at the restoration of normal life in Kosovo. It is my hope that the Verification Mission will soon be fully deployed and that it will be in a position to provide the Security Council with information on the compliance by the parties by the time of my next report as well as on the situation in Kosovo in accordance with the Security Council request in resolutions 1160 (1998) and 1199 (1998). With regard to the absence of a field capacity on the ground, except in the humanitarian and human rights field, I would hope that the Kosovo Verification Mission would assume such reporting by early February and would accordingly discontinue it, except as concerns the humanitarian and human rights situation, in order to eliminate duplication.

Annex I

Information on the situation in Kosovo and measures taken by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, submitted pursuant to paragraph 13 of Security Council resolution 1160 (1998) (November/December 1998)

General situation

1. Low-intensity conflict with incidents and moments of increased tension has continued in Kosovo since 20 November. A single armed clash in mid-December between armed Kosovo Albanians, later described as "our soldiers" by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), and forces of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia near Prizren was a significant exception to this trend.

2. The principal area of concern continues to be the western region of Kosovo, centred on the triangle formed by Malisevo and the border zone adjacent to the towns of Pec, Dakovica and Prizren. KLA activity in the area of Podujevo to the north of Pristina is an emergent source of tension. The number of demonstrations by members of the Serb community is increasing. There are indications that they may be politically motivated and that the Kosovo Albanian community is poised to follow suit.

3. There have been a number of violations of the ceasefire during the reporting period. These include KLA attacks on Serb police (MUP) vehicles, typically carried out with rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire. Incidents like these were reported in Prilep, Dolovo, Klina and Zociste. Police also invited the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission (KDOM) to investigate two other incidents on the Decani-Djakovica road in which police vehicles had been destroyed. A joint patrol of MUP and KDOM was fired upon in the general area of Belanci.

4. Armed clashes between uniformed groups of Kosovo Albanians and the Serbian security force continue to occur. The most significant of these occurred on 14 December where 31 Kosovo Albanians were killed in the border region near Prizren and 9 were taken prisoner. An attack by two gunmen in a Pec bar later that day killed six Serb youths and worsened a tense situation. The Serb authorities blamed the KLA; the KLA blamed criminals. Further reports of clashes were investigated by KDOM during the reporting period, notably in Planeja, west of Prizren, where eight corpses and ammunition were found at the scene. The funeral that followed in Velika Krusa was attended by 2,000 to 3,000 people and 25 uniformed members of the KLA.

5. Incidents of kidnap and abduction continue to create tension and division in Kosovo. KDOM successfully negotiated the release of a Serbian policeman held by the KLA since 19 November and two Tanjug journalists who had been held by the KLA for two months. Demonstrations and protests by members of the Serbian community about the missing have increased, with activity centred on the Serb town of Orahovac, east of Dakovica. The area encompassed by such protests has begun to spread. A group of 700 protestors, led by the mayor of Orahovac, marched from Orahovac to the KLA-dominated town of Dragobilja in a potentially

tense confrontation largely defused by members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM). Demonstrations have taken place twice outside the KVM headquarters at Pristina in which the crowd requested action to release Serb abductees.

6. Local agreements brokered by KDOM have proved useful in decreasing tension in some areas but levels of KLA cooperation differ; some local commanders agree to maintain a discreet posture in their areas of operation, while others are more assertive. Central control and unified political and military strategy are increasingly visible aspects of KLA activity and it remains true that KLA forces seek to fill the vacuum left by the withdrawal of Serb forces. This trend has created perceptible frustrations among the Serb authorities and an unwillingness to further cede "control" of territory. This is now marked in Podujevo, a town north of Pristina astride the principal road into Kosovo from northern Serbia, where the KLA have been seen constructing bunkers overlooking the route.

7. Isolated incidents of vandalism directed at the international community were reported, resulting in minor damage to parked vehicles. Occasional verbal abuse and stone throwing was also reported by KVM and NGO staff.

Situation of the civilian population

8. Sources of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimate that 75,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) have returned to their homes in central and western Kosovo. There are now no refugees known to be living in the open in the region but serious sheltering problems remain. Uncertainty or fear in the minds of IDPs remains the principal factor affecting returns. Where KVM and KDOM presence has been frequent, permanent returns have been substantial; in areas where such presence has been less visible, or where MUP presence has continued, the pace of return has been affected. Return trends continue to vary by region. In Decani and Junik, south of Pec, significant returns have occurred; returns to areas close to the Albanian border have been more tentative; and there have been few returns to the area of Malisevo, north of Prizren, though many of the houses in the area remain habitable.

9. MUP presence, particularly in Malisevo, continues to hamper the refugee return process. Examples include complaints by the villagers of Semetesite (north-west of Suva Reka) of harassment at a MUP checkpoint, and returnee concern about the proximity of a MUP observation point in Vitak (south-east of Klina). In the Serb village of Svinjare (south of Mitrovica), KDOM officials were informed that some members of the Serb community were refugees from neighbouring areas and were afraid to return home because of KLA threats. KDOM received complaints about a MUP checkpoint in the area of Movjalne (north-west of Prizren). MUP maintained it was vital for the protection of 15 Serb families living there; Kosovar Albanians complained that it was preventing the return of Kosovo Albanians to an essentially Albanian area. KDOM members patrolling Podujevo (north of Pristina) were informed that the KLA had been denying Serb IDPs access to villages in the area to the north of the town.

10. UNHCR published a survey of the shelter situation in 20 of the 29 municipalities of Kosovo, which, in conjunction with other NGOs, assessed the needs of 285 villages in those areas. Two hundred ten of them were found to

have been affected by the conflict, with 30 per cent of the houses destroyed, a further 30 per cent of houses suffering minor to major damage and 40 per cent left undamaged. Whereas the pre-conflict population of the villages was 349,657, the current population was 88,950 and the IDP population was 24,177, some 24 per cent of the total.

11. UNHCR has reorganized its regional structure to reflect that of the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission, with distribution points now decentralized to the main towns of Pec, Prizren and Mitrovica. Food delivery responsibilities have been divided by area with Catholic Relief Services, Mercy Corps International and the World Food Programme (WFP). Aid delivery operations by humanitarian organizations have been hampered by winter weather and food supply shortages. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has assisted with the shortfall. Kosovo's current food requirement stands at 3,600 tons per month, to feed 300,000 IDP returnees and host families.

Refugee influx

12. The situation of refugees in Albania is closely followed by the OSCE presence in Tirana. There was a slight improvement during the reporting period. The number of refugees currently in Albania remains unclear but is estimated to be 23,000. The registration process, crucial for accurate and targeted supplies, is not properly under way. This has caused instances of food shortages and of oversupply and has made the calculation of future needs difficult.

13. The situation of refugees is especially difficult in the north-east of Albania where the number of refugees is estimated at 3,000. Refugees in the Tropoje District, numbering up to 1,500, have not received aid for almost two months owing to the lack of security for aid agencies in the area. These refugees have been offered transport to other locations where the security situation permits aid agencies to supply them on a regular basis. OSCE gave initial assistance in providing administrative arrangements for their transport. A large number of the refugees who decided to leave Bajram Curri chose to go to Tirana and Durres and not to collection centres.

14. Refugees in the districts of Kukes and Has suffered food shortages owing to miscalculation of the number of refugees in the area (1,100), coupled with the fact that supplies were delayed in reaching the districts. Relief agencies are unwilling to stockpile food because of the security situation. The appalling road conditions, together with the weather and the scarcity of transport, are additional difficulties faced in determining whether refugees received aid.

15. The number of crossings from Kosovo into Albania during the reporting period was estimated to be very low, with most taking place in the area of Dobruna.

16. The Holbrooke Agreement raised expectations that a safe return to Kosovo would be feasible in the near future and resulted in a number of representatives of refugees in Albania approaching OSCE field offices requesting that their return be facilitated as soon as possible. It was initially feared that many refugees would try to return on their own initiative, running the risk of

entering minefields or being mistaken by Federal Republic of Yugoslavia forces as KLA infiltrators. By mid-November, only a limited number of refugees had crossed using this dangerous route and the message that they should wait a few more months before returning in an orderly manner seems to have been accepted, not least because many are still unhappy with the current security situation in Kosovo. The issue of refugee return is one that will need to be addressed between the relevant authorities in Albania and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Kosovo conflict spillover potential

17. The OSCE presence in Albania, the OSCE spillover mission to Skopje and the OSCE missions to Bosnia and Herzegovina and to Croatia continue to follow closely the spillover potential of the Kosovo conflict.

18. During the reporting period, the situation on the Albanian border with Kosovo (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) was relatively calm. Some isolated incidents occurred. Bad weather and poor road conditions continued to hamper movement and monitoring along the border areas. By mid-December, tension had increased at the border between Albania and Kosovo (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) after several border incidents. This was seen as an indication that the KLA had become more active after a quieter preparatory period.

19. Very limited KLA movement was observed in the Has District, although the existence of a KLA training camp with about 10 fighters near the border was reported at the beginning of December. Overall activity remains limited and is probably constrained by poor weather.

20. During December, poor weather conditions limited OSCE Mission members' movement, precluding accurate observation, but no movement of any kind could be seen within the immediate areas of Kosovo adjacent to the border.

21. Few border incidents occurred during the period but previous incidents had led the Albanian Foreign Minister in mid-December to state that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia authorities were ignoring an agreement on border incidents signed by both countries obliging the parties to verify and confirm any border incidents through a bilateral commission.

22. In his address to the OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting in Oslo on 2 December, Foreign Minister Milo of Albania said that his Government is ready "to cooperate with OSCE and other international organizations committed to Kosovo". He added that pressure should continue to be applied on Belgrade to find a satisfactory political solution and welcomed the new flexibility that, in his view, the KLA was showing with regard to demands for independence, stating that Albania was working with the KLA to convince them to be more realistic.

23. Speaking in Brussels on 7 December, Foreign Minister Milo voiced pessimism over a solution to the crisis, reaffirmed that Tirana did not subscribe to the idea of a greater Albania and rejected allegations that armed groups were being trained in its territory and sent to Kosovo.

24. The security situation remained tense during the campaign for the referendum on the Constitution held on 22 November. Media distortion and veiled threats of violence, some directed at the international community, and at OSCE in particular, were the main cause.

25. In northern Albania, in a letter sent to central government officials, the Tropoja District Council, the Mayor of Bajram Curri and political parties described the security situation as one of total lawlessness and chaos brought about by the absence of working judicial institutions and effective policing and called upon the Government to take urgent measures.

26. The situation on the northern border between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia remained stable and calm during the reporting period, without substantive incident. All border crossings remained open and functioned normally. Similarly, the western border has been quiet.

27. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia objected strongly to the intention of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to deploy an extraction force in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in relation to the Kosovo Verification Mission and sought to put pressure on the new Government over the issue. However, shortly after its endorsement by Parliament, the Government approved the stationing of NATO forces on Macedonian territory. Prime Minister Georgievski announced that the basis of the decision was the country's wish to achieve NATO membership as soon as possible, in addition to its commitments under the Partnership for Peace and certain status-of-forces agreements.

Measures taken by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

28. The process of fully establishing the Kosovo Verification Mission has continued since the Agreement between OSCE and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia of 16 October 1998 and OSCE Permanent Council Decision 263 of 25 October 1998 that formally established the Mission. Its strength on 19 December stood at 888, including 392 local staff, with 180 international staff in headquarters in Pristina and 111 in Regional Centre One (RC1), Prizren. Two coordination centres are established as RC1 sub-stations, in the towns of Orahovac and in Suva Reka. KDOM strength is now at 217. Prizren Regional Centre became fully operational on 11 December; Regional Centre 2 (Mitrovica) became operational on 19 December. All five regional centres will be fully established by the end of January 1999. Staff have now been selected for all regional centres. Liaison offices have been established in Belgrade and Tirana.

29. Patrols by KVM personnel have begun and are coordinated closely with KDOM. KVM submits a regular interim report, instituted as a temporary measure in order to inform OSCE participating States and other international organizations of developments in the Mission area pending full establishment of the Mission. Reporting will subsequently reflect the full range of KVM's verification tasks.

30. Training of KVM verifiers began on 23 November at the Kosovo Verification Mission's induction centre in Hotel Narcis in Brezovica, outside Pristina. Five training courses have been completed; they were conducted by a KVM training team with support from other OSCE missions, OSCE institutions, UNHCR and ICRC. The

syllabus consists of a four-day course with a capacity of up to 125 per course. Subjects taught include communications, policing issues, security, the human dimension and reporting procedures.

31. KVM and OSCE institutions continue to work in close cooperation with other international and humanitarian organizations in Kosovo. A fact-finding visit to Belgrade and Kosovo, led by Ambassador Stoudmann of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, was conducted from 22 to 26 November in order to carry out a preliminary assessment of conditions for elections in the region. The group included representatives from the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the International Foundation for Election Systems. KVM and UNHCR hosted a meeting of key humanitarian agencies on 14 December in Pristina to discuss the outlook for the civil population of Kosovo over the winter period.

32. The OSCE Ministerial Meeting was held at Oslo on 2 December and issued a consensus-based statement declaring that "security, human rights, democracy and fundamental freedoms are inseparable". It went on to say that "the ten basic principles of the Helsinki Final Act, together with the current operational capabilities the OSCE has gained throughout the years, have contributed to making this Organization one of the best-suited instruments to address the crisis in Kosovo" (see annex II). Ambassador William Walker, the head of KVM, briefed the OSCE Ministerial Meeting about the situation regarding the KVM. He also briefed the North Atlantic Council in Brussels.

33. Discussions between members of KVM and the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia took place on 8 December to determine arrangements concerning the Mission. The Government agreed to allow KVM members to make emergency use of medical facilities in Skopje and allowed emergency access by air and road under these conditions.

34. KVM carried out its first verification at the barracks of the Yugoslav Army's 549th Motorized Brigade in Prizren on 11 December. This consisted of a meeting at the base followed by an inspection of a company team position in Dobruste, west of Prizren. KVM officials were prevented from conducting an inspection inside the barracks as planned and lodged an official complaint.

35. NATO has begun deployment of an advance force in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Secure communications links have been established between KVM headquarters and the Kosovo Verification Coordination Centre in Skopje.

Structure

36. The Prizren Regional Centre has temporarily extended its area of operations to include the Djakovica municipality. Although this falls outside the boundaries of the Prizren political district, there is an operational need for KVM to patrol the area. When the Pec Regional Centre is established, it will undertake KVM patrolling of Djakovica.

37. KVM headquarters received 11 orange-coloured cargo vehicles during the period. There has been a delay in the arrival of armoured vehicles. The first were scheduled to be in Pristina on 18 December.

38. Current strength of KVM and KDOM on the ground in Kosovo is as follows:

KVM

Headquarters mission members	179 personnel and 2 armoured vehicles[a]
Headquarters temporary mission members	20 personnel
Induction centre	33 instructing personnel
Prizren	108 personnel and 21 armoured vehicles
Mitrovica	56 personnel
Belgrade	8 personnel
Pec (embryonic regional centre)	38 personnel
Gujilane (embryonic regional centre)	8 personnel
Pristina (embryonic regional centre)	13 personnel
KVM Local Staff (all locations)	445 personnel
Total	908

KDOM

United States	143 personnel[b] and 37 armoured vehicles
European Union	33 personnel and 14 armoured vehicles
Russian Federation	11 personnel
Canada	3 personnel and one armoured vehicle

[a] Plus 30 armoured vehicles on loan from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and 1 from Sweden; 70 soft-skinned vehicles.

[b] Thirty-three of these are in Belgrade or Skopje.

Annex II

Oslo ministerial draft statement on Kosovo

1. Involvement in Kosovo represents both a test and an opportunity for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The challenge of Kosovo shows that security, human rights, democracy and fundamental freedoms are inseparable.

2. The plight of the people of Kosovo caught up in violent confrontation and fleeing their homes in fear has moved us all.

3. Thanks to vigorous efforts by the international community, including OSCE, there is now a ceasefire. It is still fragile, but it marks a great step forward for the people of Kosovo. Now further diplomatic efforts are under way to find a political solution. They have our strong support.

4. There is still violence in Kosovo, and this is of deep concern to us. We urge all parties involved to stop the violence and to resolve their differences by peaceful means. We urge them to negotiate a settlement as soon as possible. The international community is determined to help. But only the parties can overcome their differences. The sooner they do so, the sooner the reconstruction and development of Kosovo can make headway.

5. The 10 basic principles of the Helsinki Final Act, together with the current operational capabilities OSCE has gained throughout the years, have contributed to making this Organization one of the best suited instruments to address the crisis in Kosovo. We do not take this challenge lightly. From the very beginning of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, including Kosovo, we have made every possible effort to contribute to its solution, without reservation.

6. Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998) and 1199 (1998) set out what is required of the parties to bring the confrontation to an end. OSCE has taken on the task of verifying that all parties are complying with these resolutions. OSCE is setting up its largest operation ever, the Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM). Besides verifying compliance, KVM will help to implement the political settlement to be reached by the parties by supervising elections, providing support in building up democratic institutions and assisting with police force development in Kosovo.

7. The OSCE verifiers come to Kosovo as friends of all those attached to the idea of a peaceful, long-lasting political settlement, and to provide assistance where required. In good faith, we will do all we can on our part to help ensure that this endeavour is realized through the coordinated effort of the international community.

8. The Head of KVM, Ambassador Walker, and his team have worked very hard in the past few weeks to establish the Mission. Numbers are building up quickly. We encourage all those involved to continue their excellent work. OSCE will

continue to work closely with other international organizations and NGOs involved in the international effort in Kosovo.

9. The staff of KVM must be able to carry out their duties safely. We urge all parties to the conflict to respect the ceasefire, to comply fully with relevant resolutions of the Security Council, and to cooperate closely with KVM so that it can carry out its duties unimpeded throughout Kosovo.

10. The OSCE verifiers are not a fighting force. Their true protection is the terms of agreement notion of pacta sunt servanda. In case it is required, OSCE welcomes the commitment of other organizations to provide assistance and to protect OSCE and its verifiers in its mission in Kosovo.

11. It is our hope and belief that the Kosovo Verification Mission will make the path to a settlement of the conflict in Kosovo easier. We will continue to give it our full support. But it is for the parties themselves to go down that path and to ensure that the people of Kosovo can look forward to a peaceful future.

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91, 93, 149 and 155
QUESTION OF PALESTINE
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY -
PREVENTION OF THE VIOLENT
DISINTEGRATION OF STATES
GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT
THE RISK OF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION
IN THE MIDDLE EAST
MACROECONOMIC POLICY QUESTIONS
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL
ECONOMIC COOPERATION
UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF INTERNATIONAL LAW
MEASURES TO ELIMINATE INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 22 December 1998 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the final communiqué and Abu Dhabi declaration adopted at the nineteenth session of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council held in Abu Dhabi from 7 to 9 December 1998.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 39, 40, 62, 71, 74, 91, 93, 149 and 155, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mohammad J. SAMHAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

[Original: Arabic]

Final communiqué

In response to the kind invitation of His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council held its nineteenth session in the United Arab Emirates from 18 to 20 Sha'ban A.H. 1419 (7 to 9 December A.D. 1998), under the presidency of His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates and with the participation of the following:

His Highness Sheikh Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, Amir of Bahrain;

His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, Crown Prince, First Deputy Prime Minister and Commander of the National Guard of Saudi Arabia;

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, Sultan of Oman;

His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, Amir of Qatar;

His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber al-Sabah, Amir of Kuwait.

His Excellency Sheikh Jamil Ibrahim al-Hegelan, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, also attended.

The Supreme Council considered developments in the process of cooperation in security, military, economic, social and information fields since the eighteenth session and studied the reports and recommendations submitted by the Ministerial Council. It affirmed the determination of Gulf Cooperation Council States to continue to strengthen and defend the Council's progress towards wider horizons, with a view to realizing improved results in response to the aspirations of the citizens of Council States, and in order to bring security, stability and development to the region.

The Supreme Council gave full consideration to developments in the political and security situations at regional and international levels.

The Supreme Council greatly appreciated the attendance of His Excellency Mr. Nelson Mandela, President of South Africa, at the opening meeting, the important speech he made and the meetings he had with the leaders of Gulf Cooperation Council States while the session was being held in Abu Dhabi. It commended the role the President played in establishing the excellent relations enjoyed by Council States and the Republic of South Africa, and thanked him for the appreciative remarks he made with respect to the Gulf Cooperation Council and its regional and international role. The Council extended to President Mandela its good wishes for happiness and success in his private and public life in coming years.

The Supreme Council was highly appreciative of the speech delivered by His Excellency Mr. Jacques Chirac, President of France, to the leaders of Gulf Cooperation Council States at the opening meeting, in which he expressed his country's friendship and respect for the Council.

The Supreme Council was gratified by the attendance of His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, at the opening meeting, and greatly appreciated the speech he made and the meetings he had with the leaders of Gulf Cooperation Council States. It expressed its approval of and support for the activities of the United Nations and the leading role assigned to it in dealing with international relations, which it performs in a manner that best serves international peace and security and economic, social and human development for all peoples and States of the world. The Supreme Council expressed its pride in the appreciation and respect voiced by the Secretary-General for the Gulf Cooperation Council and its importance in strengthening security, stability and development in the region.

The Supreme Council acknowledged with gratitude the attendance at the opening meeting of the nineteenth session of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council of His Excellency Dr. Esmat Abdel Meguid, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, and His Excellency Mr. Azzeddine Laraki, Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the useful meetings and consultations they held with leaders of Council States.

The process of joint cooperation

The holding of a half-yearly consultative meeting of the Supreme Council

The Supreme Council decided that His Majesty and Their Highnesses, the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council States, would hold a fraternal consultative meeting between sessions.

Military matters

The Supreme Council approved the decisions adopted at the seventeenth meeting of Their Highnesses and Their Excellencies the Ministers of Defence of the Council States, held in Riyadh, with regard to a defence force for the peninsula, continuation of the implementation of the network of security communications, radar and early warning coverage and other areas of military cooperation. The Council expressed satisfaction at the steps that had been taken, affirming the importance of continued implementation of all military cooperation programmes intended to strengthen the collective defence capabilities of every Council State.

Security

The Supreme Council approved the decisions adopted at the seventeenth meeting of Their Highnesses and Their Excellencies the Ministers of the Interior, held in Kuwait on 3 and 4 November 1998, and expressed satisfaction at the coordination and cooperation that had been effected in various areas of the security cooperation process, and, in particular, with regard to the strengthening of collective measures to combat violence and terrorism and the

development of professional training programmes and technical education in penal and reform institutions.

Economic matters

The Supreme Council studied the situation in the oil market and the effects of the fall in prices on the economies of member States. The Council stressed the desire of member States for cooperation with a view to stabilizing the oil market and improving prices, and the need for oil-producing States to abide by the reduced quotas that had been agreed upon in November 1998 in order to achieve those ends. The Supreme Council approved the extension of the reduced production quotas agreed by member States until the end of 1999, and urged other petroleum-producing States to take comparable measures in order to bring stability to the market, in the best interests of producers and consumers and of peace and stability in the global economy. If States respected the reduced quotas, Council member States were prepared to enter into appropriate arrangements with other oil-producing States with a view to stabilizing the market. The Supreme Council instructed the Committee on Petroleum Cooperation to intensify contacts to that end.

In preparation for the new round of trade negotiations to be held by the World Trade Organization in the year 2000, the Supreme Council instructed the Committee on Petroleum Cooperation and the Committee on Trade Cooperation in member States to study the effects and benefits of oil being included among the products to be completely exempt from customs duties by the World Trade Organization.

The Supreme Council reviewed the progress made in economic cooperation and the succession of steps taken with a view to establishing a customs union for member States. It approved the timetable for the establishment of such a union, and the beginning of work related to that project in March 2001. The Council instructed the Committee on Financial and Economic Cooperation to conclude an agreement on a unified customs tariff by no later than December 1999.

Desirous of achieving balance between demographic composition and the labour force in member States and increasing the level of their citizens' economic participation, the Supreme Council approved a document entitled The general framework for the demographic strategy of the Gulf Cooperation Council States.

With a view to meeting the challenges and demands of comprehensive development and drawing up broad guidelines for coping with such challenges during the first quarter of the twenty-first century and specifying the strategic goals for development in Council States, and the development processes and mechanisms necessary to achieve those goals, the Supreme Council approved a document entitled A comprehensive, long-term development strategy for Gulf Cooperation Council States, 2000-2025.

In support of the industrial development process in member States and of joint industrial cooperation efforts to achieve industrial development on an integrated basis, and with a view to increasing the contribution of the industrial sector to gross national product, the Supreme Council approved the

amended version of the unified strategy for the industrial development of the Gulf Cooperation Council States.

In order to complete the harmonization of economic regulations in member States, the Supreme Council approved the two compulsory regimes for agricultural quarantine and for veterinary quarantine in member States, the consultation process on which, held over recent years, has been completed.

With a view to ameliorating the profession of accountancy and auditing, developing standards in and effecting coordination and integration amongst member States, the Supreme Council approved the basic regulation for the accountancy and auditing board of Gulf Cooperation Council States.

In order to protect human health and the environment, the Supreme Council approved the recommendation to speed up production of lead-free gasoline (benzine) and market it in member States by the year 2002. It also approved the taking of all the measures necessary to reduce the amount of sulphur in the diesel produced by national refineries, in order to comply with the relevant maximum global levels.

The Supreme Council welcomed the establishment of the patents office and the inauguration of its work, affirming the concern of member States to protect intellectual property.

The Supreme Council reviewed the economic situation in member States, and affirmed its concern to ensure the continuance of a climate favourable to investment in those countries, with a view to strengthening the production capacities of their economies and increasing employment opportunities for nationals. It commended the private sector's effective participation in various economic sectors and activities.

With regard to expanding the range of Gulf Cooperation Council States' economic relations with international economic groupings and States, the Supreme Council acknowledged the efforts made to develop and deepen the dialogue and negotiations with such groupings and States, and stressed the importance of increased efforts to expand the range of Council States' relations with them, thereby assuring joint economic and investment interests and removing obstacles to Council States' exports reaching such groupings and world markets.

The Consultative Council

The Supreme Council having constituted the Consultative Council, it expressed its satisfaction at the inauguration of its work, and instructed it to consider the employment of national labour forces and to facilitate the transfer thereof between States in order to increase employment opportunities for Council States' nationals.

Human concerns and the environment

The Supreme Council decided that Council States' Ministers of Education should prepare a comprehensive study for the development of curricula, with a

view to strengthening mutual contacts and best serving the needs of member States, reinforcing Council procedures and achieving its goals.

Information

The Supreme Council took cognizance of the conclusions of the ninth meeting of Information Ministers, held in November 1998, and approved the recommendations submitted concerning support and encouragement for joint information activities carried out by the information organs of Council States. The Council also decided that those organs should continue to monitor developments in international information in conformity with the goals of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The Joint Supreme Committee for Cooperation between Qatar and the United Arab Emirates

The Supreme Council took cognizance of the agreement to establish the Joint Supreme Committee for Cooperation between Qatar and the United Arab Emirates signed in Doha on 17 Sha'ban A.H. 1419 (6 December A.D. 1998), welcoming the agreement as beneficial to and in the best interests of the two countries and their fraternal peoples and as a positive and important step in support of Gulf Cooperation Council work and consonant with the lofty goals of Council States.

Political matters

Implementation by Iraq of Security Council resolutions relating to its aggression against Kuwait

The Supreme Council discussed developments in Iraq's implementation of Security Council resolutions relating to its aggression against Kuwait, and noted the successive crises with the United Nations provoked by the Iraqi Government and the consequent tension and threat to security and stability in the region. The Council expressed its satisfaction that the most recent crisis between Iraq and the United Nations had been defused by the Iraqi Government's renunciation of its decisions of 5 August and 31 October 1998 to halt cooperation with the Special Commission (UNSCOM) and the International Atomic Energy Agency, and its resumption of cooperation with United Nations inspectors in accordance with the mechanisms provided for in the Security Council resolutions and the memorandum of understanding signed by the Government of Iraq and the Secretary-General of the United Nations in February 1998. The fraternal Iraqi people and the region were thereby spared any further perils and security and stability were upheld. The Council affirmed its support for the endeavours of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Special Commission, which has been given an international mandate to eliminate all Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. The Council stressed that the Iraqi Government should strictly and faithfully undertake its obligation to implement all Security Council resolutions without conditions or exceptions, and, in particular, with regard to the elimination of all Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, the freeing of Kuwaiti and other prisoners and detainees, the return of Kuwaiti property and compliance with Security Council resolution 949 (1994), which demands that Iraq not again utilize its military or any other forces in a hostile or provocative manner to threaten the State of Kuwait or its neighbours. The performance of these

obligations would help to ease the sanctions imposed on Iraq and alleviate the suffering of the fraternal Iraqi people, for which the Iraqi Government is entirely responsible and by which Council States are deeply distressed. In view of that suffering, the Council welcomed the oil-for-food agreement to supply the fraternal Iraqi people with food and medicine, and Security Council resolution 1210 (1998) renewing that agreement, just as it has always welcomed any initiative that serves to alleviate that suffering.

The Supreme Council reiterated the statement made at its previous session and published in the relevant documents, to the effect that Iraq must unequivocally and clearly recognize that its attack on and occupation of Kuwait was a violation of Arab and international conventions and legitimacy, a violation of the Charter of the League of Arab States, the Joint Arab Defence Treaty and the Charter of the United Nations. It also reiterated its appeal to Iraq to take the sufficient and necessary steps, in word and in deed, to prove its peaceful intentions towards Kuwait and its neighbouring States, in a manner that would bring security and stability to all States of the region.

The Supreme Council reaffirmed its steadfast endorsement of the continued independence, territorial integrity and regional security of Iraq.

The question of the occupation of the three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates and relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran

(a) The issue of the occupation of the three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates:

The Supreme Council reviewed developments in the matter of the Iranian occupation of the three islands of the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa belonging to the United Arab Emirates. It noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran was persisting in making unacceptable claims with regard to the three islands and continuing to take measures designed to consolidate its occupation. The Supreme Council once again reaffirmed the need for the Iranian Government to respond to the repeated earnest and sincere invitations from the United Arab Emirates, the Gulf Cooperation Council States, the Damascus Declaration States, the League of Arab States and other regional and international organizations, institutions and groupings, to arrive at a peaceful solution of this conflict, thereby allowing the positive policies of the Government of President Mohammad Khatami to gain the credibility necessary for the establishment of mutual confidence, the development of cooperation and the upholding of security and stability in the region.

The Supreme Council reiterated its affirmation that the United Arab Emirates holds sovereignty over the three islands of the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa and its absolute support for all peaceful measures and means that country might adopt in order to restore its sovereignty over those islands. It also reiterated its request to the Iranian Government to terminate its occupation of the three islands, desist from its policy of imposing the status quo by force, refrain from placing Iranian installations on the islands with a view to altering their demographic composition, annul all measures, remove all installations already unilaterally put in place on the islands and use peaceful means, including referral of the issue to the International Court

of Justice, in order to resolve the dispute, in accordance with the principles and precepts of international law.

(b) Relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran:

The Supreme Council carried out a comprehensive review of the relations of Council States with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and of the outcome of bilateral contacts since the Council's last session in the light of the Gulf Cooperation Council position, which focuses on the importance of establishing good relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, pursuant to the principles of good-neighbourliness, mutual respect, consideration for shared interests, non-interference in internal affairs, refraining from the use or threat of force and the resolution of disputes by peaceful means. The Supreme Council expressed its conviction that trust could be built by taking practical steps to resolve the problems between the two sides, pursuant to the established international precepts and norms with regard to the resolution of disputes by peaceful means. A prime example of such a dispute is the continued occupation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of the three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates.

The Supreme Council welcomed the efforts made by Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, with a view to arranging negotiations between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran in order to settle their dispute over the three islands. The Supreme Council urged the Secretary-General of the United Nations to continue his efforts and to sponsor the negotiations.

The Supreme Council also called upon the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to make some meaningful response to the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in order to establish security and stability in the region.

The Middle East peace process

The Supreme Council considered developments in the Middle East peace process and welcomed the Wye River Memorandum signed on 23 October 1998 by the Palestinian and Israeli sides. This represents an important and positive step that must be followed by further steps towards carrying out all the agreements signed by the parties concerned, upholding all Arab rights and laying the foundations for security, stability and a comprehensive and lasting peace in the best interests of all the peoples of the region. It also expressed its appreciation of the significant efforts made by the President of the United States, Mr. William Clinton, to ensure that the Palestinian and Israeli sides had concluded that agreement. In this context, the Supreme Council demands that the Israeli Government should, without procrastination, honour its obligation to implement the Memorandum in a faithful and scrupulous fashion.

The Supreme Council reaffirmed that the peace which is sought can only be achieved through the restoration of legitimate Arab rights and commitment to the resolutions of international legitimacy, the central themes of the Madrid Peace Conference and the principle of land for peace, pursuant to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 425 (1978) and 426 (1978). It also reiterated its affirmation that peace will only be just, lasting and

comprehensive when the Palestinian people obtains its legitimate national rights, foremost of which is the establishment of an independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital; that Israel must completely withdraw from all occupied Arab territory, including the Syrian Arab Golan, to the boundary line that existed on 4 June 1967, and from southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa, pursuant to Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978), without imposing conditions or restrictions, and that the United Nations should remain seized of the matter.

The Supreme Council expressed its absolute rejection and condemnation of the settlement policy pursued by Israel in the occupied Arab territories and of the Israeli Government's decision to expand the geographical boundaries of the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and change its demographic composition, considering that decision to be a violation of the provisions of international law and the resolutions of international legitimacy. It reaffirmed its commitment to the resolutions of international legitimacy which stipulate that situations resulting from Israeli settlement activity in the occupied Arab territories should not be recognized or accepted, and demanded that such activities should cease and that Israel should refrain from any action that could have a negative impact on the final status negotiations with the Palestinian side.

While it appreciates the efforts made by the United States Administration, the Russian Federation, the European Union and its member States to help put the peace process back on track, the Supreme Council urges those States to continue to expand their effective role and bring pressure to bear on Israel to honour its undertakings and carry out its commitments, and to insist on the need for negotiations to be resumed on the Syrian track from the point at which they broke off, as well as on the Lebanese track, in order to achieve peace, security and stability for the region and its peoples.

The elimination of weapons of mass destruction

The Supreme Council renewed its request to the international community to work towards the establishment of a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, in the Middle East, including the Gulf region. The Council reiterated its affirmation that Israel must accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and place all its nuclear installations under the international inspection system of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The Lockerbie question

The Supreme Council reviewed developments in the Lockerbie crisis and the response of the parties concerned to the diplomatic initiatives put forward with a view to resolving the issue. It expressed the hope that the recent visit paid by Mr. Kofi Annan to the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya would lead to a resolution of the issue.

The phenomenon of extremism, violence and terrorism

The Supreme Council reiterated its categorical rejection of all forms of extremism, violence and terrorism, whatever their source or incentive, and

wherever they occur, and of the danger they represent and the threat they pose to the security, peace and stability of States, their citizens and residents. The Council affirmed the determination of its States to resist this phenomenon and to confront it by an intensification of security contacts, coordination and cooperation. At the same time, it urged all States, and, in particular, those linked to Council States by ties of friendship and mutual interest, not to harbour terrorist and extremist elements and groups, offer them political asylum or permit them to use the territory and laws of those States to carry out their terrorist activities and acts of sabotage and to alarm the peaceful and innocent. The Supreme Council renewed its call for the conclusion of an international convention to combat terrorism, affirming its conviction that the best and only way to eradicate terrorism was by means of international action agreed upon at the United Nations and guaranteeing that this international phenomenon, which claims human victims and causes material losses, would be suppressed. In this context, the Supreme Council applauded the signature of the Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism at the League of Arab States in April 1998.

The re-appointment of the Secretary-General

The Supreme Council expressed its appreciation of the sterling efforts made by the Secretary-General and his effective contribution to the strengthening of the Council's performance. It decided to renew the appointment of His Excellency Sheikh Jamil Ibrahim al-Hegelan as Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council for a further three years with effect from 1 April 1999, wishing His Excellency every success in his duties during the forthcoming period.

The nomination of His Excellency Dr. Ghazi bin Abdul-Rahman Al-Qusaibi for the post of Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

The Supreme Council welcomed the nomination of His Excellency Dr. Ghazi bin Abdul-Rahman Al-Qusaibi, currently Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Kingdom, for the post of Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Elections for the post will be held at the headquarters of the Organization during the one hundred and fifty-seventh session of its Executive Board in October 1999.

The Council expressed its satisfaction with regard to and welcomed the fact that Arab States, at the conference of Ministers of Education held recently in Tripoli, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, had announced this nomination, considering His Excellency Dr. Ghazi bin Abdul-Rahman Al-Qusaibi as standing on behalf of the Arab States. The Council expressed the hope that all friendly countries throughout the world would support this nomination.

The Supreme Council expressed its deep appreciation to His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, and to the Government and people of the United Arab Emirates for the warmth of their reception, their gracious hospitality and their genuinely fraternal sentiments, commending the arrangements that had been made in order to host the meeting.

The leaders of Council States praised the important role played by His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates and President of the current session of the Supreme Council, in conducting the meetings, which had a major impact on bringing about the decisions and important conclusions through which the aspirations of the peoples of Council States are addressed.

The Supreme Council congratulated His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, and the people of the United Arab Emirates on the occasion of their twenty-seventh National Day, wishing the United Arab Emirates every success and prosperity.

The leaders of Council States expressed the pleasure they felt at the awarding of the International Peace Prize to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, Sultan of Oman, and availed themselves of the opportunity to renew their sincere congratulations to His Majesty. The prize represents international appreciation of the value of His Majesty's wise policies and recognition of his role in serving and upholding the causes of regional and international peace.

The Supreme Council commended the genuine and sincere efforts made by His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber al-Sabah, Amir of Kuwait during his presidency of the eighteenth session of the Supreme Council, and the wisdom and ability shown by His Highness in his laudable conduct of and follow-up to the proceedings.

The Supreme Council looks forward to meeting at its twentieth session, to be held, God willing, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in December 1999, at the kind invitation of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahd Bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud, King of Saudi Arabia.

Abu Dhabi, 9 December 1998

The Abu Dhabi Declaration

Adopted at the nineteenth session of the
Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council

9 December 1998

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

The Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council,

at its nineteenth session held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, having discussed the current Arab situation in a spirit of the utmost responsibility and with a deep desire to achieve a better future for the peoples of the Arab nation,

Guided by our true religion and our tolerant Shariah, and prompted by the purposes and aims of the Charters of the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council;

Believing in the common destiny of the Arab nation and in the unbreakable bonds linking the Arab peoples;

Believing also that a better future can only be assured for the Arab nation by a firm commitment to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charters and resolutions of the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the United Nations, with a view to avoiding the negative aspects of the past that have led to a state of fragmentation and lack of unity;

Conscious that only effective Arab solidarity based on Arab legitimacy and the Islamic faith will make it possible to protect Arab first principles, safeguard the vital interests of the Arab nation and confront the challenges of the future;

Convinced of the close linkage of national interests with those of the Arab nation and of the clear connection between the national security of Arab States and that of the Arab nation;

Affirming the purposes and principles of joint Arab action based on integrity of intentions, a commitment to legality, national sovereignty, mutual respect, non-interference in internal affairs, non-recourse to threat or use of force and the use of peaceful means to resolve disputes; and affirming the mutual dependence of Arab States;

Having learned the lessons imposed by the nature of the political and economic changes in the international arena, and the current flux in international relations;

Conscious of the need to prepare joint Arab action in order to confront the challenges arising from the effect of international changes on the Arab region and to remove the negative aspects of the past;

Declares its determination to do the following:

First: Work to strengthen Arab relations in accordance with established Arab, Islamic and international principles, laws and conventions in order to enable our Arab nation to rebuild Arab solidarity;

Second: Make a sustained effort to rebuild Arab relations on a firm foundation of security, confidence and trust;

Third: Work in order to build effective Arab solidarity on the solid ground of a commitment to the principles and precepts of joint Arab action;

Fourth: Develop joint Arab action with a view to realizing the aspirations of Arab States to development, construction, security and stability, and in order to prepare the Arab region for the demands of international political and economic change and ensure the material and moral well-being of the peoples of the Arab nation.

Abu Dhabi, 20 Sha'ban A.H. 1419 (9 December A.D. 1998)